

Florida's Governor Demands Retraction From Collier's

By the Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., April 27.—Statements in Collier's Magazine about Gov. Fuller Warren brought a demand for retraction from the governor even before it was placed on the news stands today.

Gov. Warren said an article featured on the magazine's cover, "Secret Mr. Big of Florida," contains "statements which I allege to be false and defamatory in accordance with the laws of Florida relating to suits for libel."

In a letter to the magazine the governor also said: "I demand and shall expect from you a fair, full and complete retraction and apology in the earliest issue of your magazine which your production schedule will permit."

Constitutes Formal Notice. The language of the Governor's letter constitutes the notice required by law before a libel suit may be brought in Florida. If the magazine retracts the statements which Gov. Warren contends are libelous and he should win a suit, he could recover only actual damages. Without a retraction he also could collect punitive damages beyond his provable losses.

There was no immediate comment from publishers of Collier's. The "Mr. Big" was identified by Collier's as William H. Johnston, owner of four Florida dog racing tracks and a contributor to Gov. Warren's campaign for the governorship.

The article, said Gov. Warren, states that he and three others entered into a conspiracy whereby State business would be divided among the three and that he used his office to permit unlawful gambling enterprises.

The Governor listed the three as Mr. Johnston, C. V. Griffin, citrus grower, and Louis Wolfson, Jacksonville industrialist, who, with a group, purchased the Capital Transit Co. in Washington 18 months ago.

The article further states, Gov. Warren added, that under terms of the conspiracy "the money alleged to have been loaned and contributed by Mr. Johnston, Mr. Griffin and Mr. Wolfson to my gubernatorial political campaign would be recouped together with an indeterminable profit at the price by me of abdication my duty and responsibility as chief magistrate of a sovereign State."

The article, continued Gov. Warren, "is libelous, defamatory and was not published in good faith, or with good motive." Collier's reported Mr. Wolfson contributed \$300,000 to the Warren campaign and said he had



ART CONTEST WINNERS—Garet W. Jex, of the graphic section of the United States Public Health Service, presents awards to four first place winners in the art contest at Christ Settlement House, 608 Massachusetts avenue N.E. Winners, left to right, are Jimmy Higgs, 14, of 626 B street N.E.; Roland Hutchins, 11, of 600 B street N.E.; Robert Foster, 16, of 142 Tennessee avenue N.E.; and Joseph Quintano, 13, of 100 Sixth street N.E. Mr. Jex was chairman of the contest jury. —Star Staff Photo.

in his strong box a \$100,000 note signed by the Governor. The magazine said the industrialist also had a \$125,000 life insurance policy on Gov. Warren "assigned to protect the loan."

Mr. Wolfson said at Washington, where he is Capital Transit's board chairman, that he had not contributed \$300,000 but "substantially \$150,000" to Gov. Warren's campaign and that he had lent the Governor money "off and on over a period of years." He added:

"I loaned him money after he got out of the Navy before he started his active campaign. 'Today, I haven't got a note of his in any strong box for \$100,000. Any loans I've ever made to him I've never had any difficulties with. I don't recall what the amount is. He may owe me a few thousand dollars or it could be many thousand. That's a very personal matter.'"

Mr. Wolfson said he wasn't sure whether he still had a life insurance policy Gov. Warren at one time had assigned to him. In Chicago, Mr. Johnston termed ridiculous "that reference to me having anything to do with dividing up the business of the State." He said he hadn't seen a copy of Collier's article and thus "can't say any more about it."

Mr. Griffin said he had no

comment. It was he who first said that he, Mr. Wolfson and Mr. Johnston had made large contributions to Gov. Warren's campaign. His announcement came in February, 1950, when he severed relationships with the Governor.

The Senate Crime Investigating Committee called Mr. Johnston "an associate of Capone mobsters." Gov. Warren has described him as "my loyal friend for about 15 years." The Governor said he considers Mr. Johnston a good citizen and a "courteous, considerate gentleman."

Caldwell Incident Recalled.

Gov. Warren isn't the first Florida Governor to have a brush with Collier's Magazine. Millard Caldwell, his predecessor in office, sued the same magazine for criticizing him for a statement made after a Negro was taken from a jail at Madison and killed.

Mr. Caldwell said the magazine falsely portrayed him as condoning a lynching. The case was settled by a \$50,000 payment from the magazine. Gov. Warren included with the copy of his letter to Collier's—distributed to reporters yesterday—a memorandum on the Collier-Caldwell suit. He said the magazine had been convicted of "lying about the plaintiff Caldwell as Governor of Florida."

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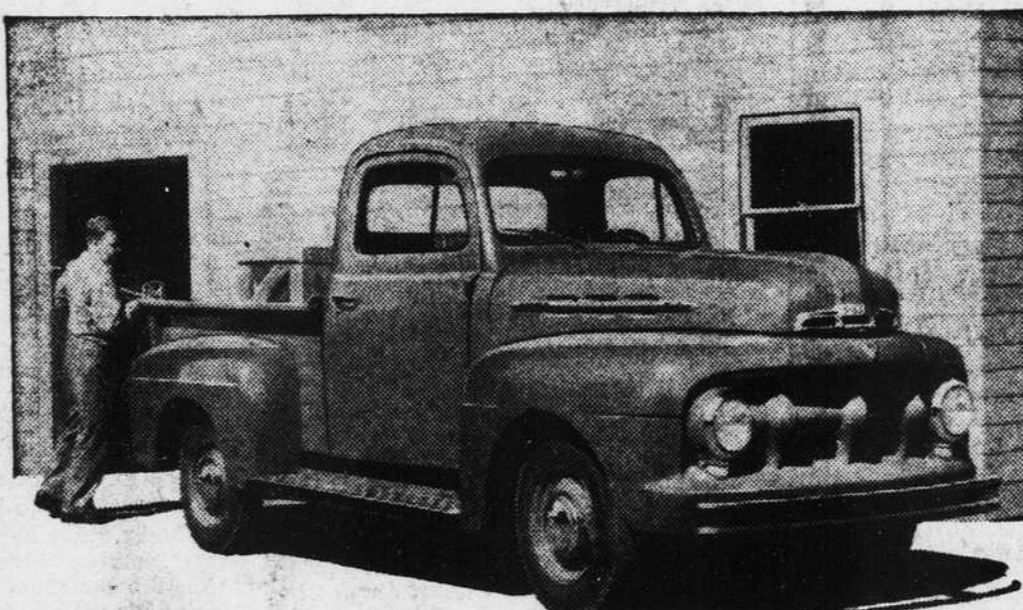


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